

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

September 23, 2004

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear ~~Mr. President~~ *Mr. President*,

I am greatly troubled by your comments this week dismissing the recently issued National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) regarding Iraq. An NIE represents the consensus opinion of the Intelligence Community and is the most comprehensive analysis available on a specific national security issue. In reading the NIE on Iraq, I was deeply disturbed by the magnitude of the problems we face, even under the best possible scenario. Such an assessment is among our most valuable intelligence tools, and should not be brushed aside.

The recent NIE presents a thorough, thoughtful and frank assessment of the challenges to future stability in Iraq. Based on all available data from public and classified sources, the NIE projects the most likely scenarios – not just possible, but probable scenarios – over the next eighteen months. The document describes the political, economic, cultural and security situation and paints an extraordinarily bleak picture of the road ahead.

While predictive intelligence is always difficult, the collective view reflected in an NIE is much more than “just guessing.” To dismiss this work as irrelevant does a disservice to the experienced analysts who reached these tough conclusions. It sends a message to the country that this administration will pick and chose among the Intelligence Community’s judgments depending on whether they support your own beliefs.

Your comments not only trivialized the important work done by the Intelligence Community, but also left an erroneous impression of the contents of this assessment. The NIE does not suggest that “Life could be lousy. Life could be ok. Life could be better.” Rather, it describes in detail

three scenarios, the most promising of which closely resembles the current increasingly dangerous situation in Iraq.

In order for us to conduct a well informed debate about the future of Iraq, and to let the American public draw its own conclusions about the nature and quality of this document, I and several other members of the Senate Intelligence Committee are asking Acting DCI John McLaughlin to provide an unclassified version of this critical assessment. I hope you will endorse this request.

I believe your comments have further undermined the credibility of our country and our government, which is already damaged by the mistakes and exaggerations related to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. At this critical time we should be strengthening, not undercutting our intelligence agencies. I hope that upon further reflection you will reconsider and further revise your public comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John D. Rockefeller IV", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John D. Rockefeller IV
Vice Chairman